

W. R. Thrall
Military - div. of the 'Loyal Legion' of the U.S.

A STENOGRAPHIC COPY
OF THE
VERBAL REPORT
OF SOME OF THE
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMANDERY-IN-CHIEF
PHILADELPHIA, OCTOBER 20, 1909
MADE AT THE
STATED MEETING OF THE OHIO COMMANDERY
COLUMBUS, O., NOVEMBER 3, 1909
BY
MAJOR W. R. THRALL,
Recorder Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion.
Published by Order of the Commandery

2462
.2
T52

REPORT.

THE COMMANDER: We will now hear the RECORDER's report of the proceedings of the Commandery-in-Chief.

THE RECORDER: Mr. Commander; by reason of the resolution at the last stated meeting I proceeded to Philadelphia to as well as I could individually represent the Ohio Commandery at the Commandery-in-Chief. This Commandery is entitled to thirty-six votes in the Commandery-in-Chief. I am sorry to say that I stood there alone as your representative. I do not know exactly what the attendance was. It could not have been far from one hundred members. Am I right, General Dodge?

GENERAL DODGE : Yes.

THE RECORDER: Commander-in-Chief Dodge presided. The business of the Commandery-in-Chief is all prepared in advance by that able Recorder-in-Chief, who might properly be styled the father of the Loyal Legion, because he was the *Recorder* of the Commandery of Pennsylvania from which was extended the order to give it its national character, and to give to twenty States, and the District of Columbia, the right each to have a Commandery of its own.

In the preparation of the cases that are submitted to the Commandery-in-Chief the papers are all arranged and when called it is generally moved to refer to a Committee of Three. That is agreed to and the Chair appoints the Committee of Three. The committee takes the subject-matter with these papers, retires to a back room or some other room and considers the matter and brings back a report; whereupon some one promptly suggests that the report of the committee be adopted, and that the conclusions be recorded as the decision of the Commander-in-Chief; and that carries with great unanimity in almost all cases. I speak of this to show that the Commandery-in-Chief is compelled to adopt this course, I suppose, by reason of the limited time allowed for the discussion of and the knowledge of all the business that is presented to it during the year. We only had one day. We met at ten o'clock in the morning, had our recess probably of thirty or forty minutes for a light buffet lunch in the rooms, and continued business through the day until five o'clock in the evening; so that the entire transactions of the Commandery-in-Chief with all the complicated cases that are presented to it are to be disposed of in that period of time.

Among the exciting cases that were before them was the case of Captain Ferdinand Hanson, from Sioux City, Iowa; Captain Hanson was a gallant soldier. He served three years with an unquestioned record, but about the close of that time he got into a controversy with some brother officer, and, being a German, educated at Heidelberg, infected with the idea of honor and the importance of maintaining it, and a duel being the only remedy, he challenged his brother officer to fight a duel, and the duel was fought. He thus violated one of the articles of war, and was court-martialed and dismissed the service. Subsequently I understand, and if I am in error I hope that our late Commander-in-Chief will correct me, Congress amended his record and I understand gave him an honorable discharge. When he received that, which I think was two or three years ago, he made application to become a member of the Loyal Legion,

and it was excepted to that the law and rule of the Loyal Legion was that no man who had not an honorable discharge at the close of the war could become a member of the Loyal Legion. The case was discussed for two or three hours and as near as I could judge the sentiment was pretty evenly divided. Even those who believe in the rule that an honorable discharge at the close of the war was indispensable to membership in the Loyal Legion thought because of the good record of this man before the war, during the war, and since the war, Congress having corrected the record upon the rolls of the department and given him an honorable discharge years and years afterwards, that he ought to be entitled to some consideration. The Recorder-in-Chief made an argument that there had been introduced into the last Congress of the United States nearly nine hundred bills for the correction of the records of men who were discharged from the Army, some for desertion, some for absence without leave and some for one thing and some for another, claiming that those nine hundred cases, so far as they were officers, would all become applicants to the Loyal Legion, and that we must adhere to the original law that a man must have had an honorable discharge at the close of the war or the doors of the Loyal Legion were shut against him. With that argument, which was about the closing of the arguments made, the vote was taken and the report of the Committee that he was ineligible was carried by a small majority.

The Commander-in-Chief has among his duties the appointment of a Committee on Nominations, and by rule appoints one member from each Commandery. There were sixteen Commanderies represented out of the twenty-one. Being the only representative from Ohio, I had no difficulty in getting on the Committee. I had placed in my hands a paper giving the record of the Registrar-in-Chief who has held that office for several years and who was again nominated for re-election. I took exceptions—I am telling you, Companions, what I did as your representative. I am telling you what I saw and what I heard, without expressing an opinion. I objected to the nomination, by this Committee, of Major William P. Huxford, the *Recorder* of the Commandery of the District of Columbia, because I had placed in my hands the record taken from the Adjutant-General's office of the War Department, giving the information of his court-martial while serving in the Army; that he was indicted, so to speak, upon six counts, that he was convicted upon five, and that the sentence of the court was that he should be "dishonorably dismissed from the service (cashiered was in fact the harsher term used) and should be forever prohibited from holding office of honor and emolument in the United States." And yet here he was, being renominated for the position of Registrar-in-Chief upon the national staff. I asked the privilege of reading that record, a copy of which I held in my hand. He had some friends upon the committee who vigorously objected and who raised the point of order that I had no right to bring anything like that in; and I argued on the other hand that I thought that was what we were there for, that we were to nominate good and true men to represent us in an official capacity upon what might be denominated the national staff, and we had a right to inquire into the characters of the men that we were proposing to nominate.

I was overruled and was not permitted to read that document. I had,

however, said enough to make an impression upon some of the members, so that when the ballot was taken Major Huxford received six votes, and Captain Foering, who had been for many years the Chancellor-in-Chief, ten votes, and was nominated in his place. I had placed Captain Foering in nomination on the spur of the moment because he was the only man that occurred to me thinking that his office would be in line of promotion and that he would be entirely acceptable to everybody. The consequence was he was nominated, and then a new man was put in his place as Chancellor-in-Chief, and the report was ordered to be made to the Commandery for its action. That report was not called for until probably the last half hour of the session, and when called for the *Recorder-in-Chief* objected to Captain Foering being taken from the Chancellor-in-Chief and nominated as Registrar-in-Chief, that in the position he had occupied for many years he was simply invaluable, and his place could not be supplied, and he therefore moved that Captain Foering's name be substituted for Chancellor-in-Chief instead of Registrar-in-Chief, and submitted the declination of the nominee for Chancellor-in-Chief. Thereupon Captain Foering immediately rose to his feet and declined the nomination as Registrar-in-Chief—a thing unlooked for. Immediately one of Major Huxford's friends renominated him; the Commandery overruled the action of the Committee, and ordered that the *Recorder-in-Chief* cast one ballot for the Commandery. I was at the end of my string; I had nobody to suggest as a substitute for him, and the thing went through, and you again have Major Huxford as your Registrar-in-Chief for the period of two years to come, unless sooner relieved.

I state this fact because it was a part of the doings at Philadelphia.

We were most beautifully entertained. The Commandery of Pennsylvania holds its meetings in the Union League Building, a historical structure, that I think has no equal in the United States, and we attended a stated meeting of the Pennsylvania Commandery there on the night of the 20th of October. We were handsomely entertained. We took the train of cars provided for us on the morning of the 21st, and went on our way to Gettysburg, the guests throughout of the Pennsylvania Commandery. At Gettysburg we spent two days. We arrived about 11 o'clock in the morning, went over the ground of the first day's fight and up Culp's Hill, and the second day we put in on the second and third day's fight, going over the whole field, one hundred and more of the old veterans, many of them acting as guides, and giving details of incidents during the battle. It was one of the most impressive experiences that I have ever had. We separated at Gettysburg, some going home by way of Harrisburg and Pittsburg and others to Philadelphia.

I do not know of any other business that was of importance there except the action taken upon the objections made by Major Huxford to the admission of Major Loeffler to membership in the Ohio Commandery. Many of you are acquainted with the details of that matter. Major Loeffler was a German enlisted in the regular army long before the Civil War, and had a service of over forty years. After the Civil War, General Grant, knowing him as he did, appointed him doorkeeper at the White House. He continued in that capacity through both of his administrations and continuously until the present administra-

tion. President McKinley was so much attached to the man and so appreciated the wonderful service he had done for his country that during his term of office he appointed Major Loeffler a Captain in the Regular Army. That created some disturbance in the District of Columbia. There were a good many army officers who thought that was a pretty big jump from a non-commissioned officer up to a Captain, and it created a little bit of irritation. After receiving his commission as Captain in the Army he applied to the Commandery of the District of Columbia for membership in their Commandery. In a very short time he discovered, through his friends, that a movement had been started to blackball him, and he was advised to withdraw his application. That was in 1899. Am I mistaken about that? Well, at any rate, he withdrew his application from the Commandery before it was reported upon and before any action was had. More than five years afterwards he applied to the Ohio Commandery, giving his place of residence as Canton, Stark County, Ohio, President McKinley's old home, where he had spent a great deal of his time since the President's death and where he was a witness to President McKinley's will. Immediately Major Huxford interposed objections to the Commandery-in-Chief. As soon as I had promulgated his application in the circular of the Ohio Commandery I got word from headquarters to arrest the election of Loeffler and to forward all papers to headquarters. I did so, and in a few days afterwards the Commandery-in-Chief met in Cincinnati and the subject came up again, and I asked the *Recorder-in-Chief* to kindly inform us what was the reason that the Ohio Commandery had been arrested in the discharge of its duties by a mandate from headquarters in relation to Captain Loeffler's case, and was informed "that I had omitted to state in the promulgation the fact that he had previously applied to the Washington Commandery, and had withdrawn his application before making application in Ohio." I inquired, "Is that all that is the trouble?" The *Recorder-in-Chief* said it was all he knew of. I then said, "I will repromulgate that in our next circular and state the fact that he had five years previously applied to the Washington Commandery, and had withdrawn his application." I did so, and at the next meeting Captain Loeffler was elected. The papers were all forwarded to headquarters, and he appeared personally at a stated meeting and was obligated and in due time his insignia and diploma were sent to him, and he is a member in good standing in the Ohio Commandery to-day. But there has since been, through the industry of this man Huxford, again interposed additional objections to Captain Loeffler. Four years ago that was referred to a Committee of Three again, and that Committee of Three waited until the second year and then they reported back that they wanted further time. They were given another year and then they reported back that they still wanted further time; and only two weeks before the meeting in Philadelphia on the 20th of October, I received official notice from the *Recorder-in-Chief* that the Committee had at last made a report. I immediately notified Companion Loeffler, not knowing what the report was, not knowing how it was to be met, not knowing what evidence had been adduced, I proceeded as your representative to try and find out, and I had great difficulty in finding out, but finally I was notified that this Committee was in a room and that if I had anything to say to go in before them, that they were going to hear that case. I went into the room. I succeeded in having my friend and our friend, Gen-

eral Black, accompany me and also Lieutenant Patrick, a member of this Commandery, who practices law in Washington. This Committee said they were prepared to see us, and I made the best argument I could in the case and then asked General Black if he would not please follow upon the legal features of it, which he did, and presented a clear and as I thought unquestioned case for that Committee that would justify the Ohio Commandery in their election of Captain Loeffler. When Companion Huxford was called upon, he did not occupy three minutes. He made a few scattered remarks and the trial closed. When the report of the Committee was presented to the Commandery-in-Chief, in session it read as follows, and I am indebted to the courtesy of Recorder-in-Chief Nicholson for a copy of this report forwarded to me under date of the 28th of October, "because," he says, "the publication of the journal will be delayed for some little time, I send for your information a copy of the report of the committee for such use as you may think proper to make of it."

The committee appointed to consider the Loeffler case respectfully submit the following:

"Captain Charles David Adam Loeffler made application for membership in this order, through the Commandery of the District of Columbia during the month of April, 1899, giving his residence as Washington, D. C., but before the Commandery took action thereon, the application was withdrawn.

"During the month of September, 1904, this officer again made application for membership in the Order, this time through the Commandery of Ohio, giving his residence as Canton, Stark County, Ohio, and was duly elected in that Commandery, November 2, 1904.

"It appears from an interview with Major Huxford, *Recorder* of the District of Columbia Commandery, Major Loeffler admitted that he was not then and never had been a resident of Canton, Stark County, Ohio, but that there was a probability that at some future time he might reside there. Although he was advised to withdraw his application, because of this misstatement of fact, he did not do so, but allowed his election to proceed as stated above.

"It is a well-known fact that Major Loeffler has been a resident of the city of Washington for many years past and has occupied a prominent position during these years in the White House.

"The Commandery-in-Chief has twice upheld the provision of the Constitution contained in Section I, Article VI, and which has been violated by Major Loeffler. First in the case of Reeves, *Journal of the Commandery-in-Chief*, October, 1898, page 110, and second in the case of Bosworth, *Journal*, October, 1906, page 139. In each of these cases there had been an election to membership in Commanderies other than the one in the State where the candidate resided, and in each case the Commandery-in-chief declared such election null and void, under the provisions of Section 10, Article VI, of the Constitution of the Order.

"The committee are of the opinion that in view of the action of the Commandery-in-Chief at its meeting in 1904, approving the report of the committee to which has been referred the case of Loeffler, which committee had recommended that action on the application should not be taken by the Commandery of the State of Ohio pending decision of the Commandery-in-Chief, the election should not have been made.

"The committee, therefore, recommend that following the precedent established in the above cited cases, the election of Major Loeffler be declared null and void.

A. NOEL BLAKEMAN,
WILLIAM H. LAMBERT,
HENRY L. SWORDS,
Committee."

Let me say that at the hearing before the committee, where General Black and myself and Patrick made the argument for Captain Loeffler, and Huxford hadn't anything to say, this interview was never alluded to. Nobody ever heard of it. But after we had gotten through before the Commandery-in-Chief, twenty minutes before the close of the session, he then read a long interview that he claimed he had had with Loeffler and had a stenographer there he said who took it down. It was immediately denied by General Black, who got his information from Lieutenant Patrick, who was conversant with the facts, and who said that statements contained in that alleged affidavit were untrue. And yet it was the basis of the report of this committee.

When this interview was read by Huxford, Companion Woodbury, of Vermont stated that he thought it was unfair for the Commandery-in-Chief to act, basing it upon an interview which had been kept from Companion Loeffler and those who represented him, and from the Commandery of the State of Ohio, and that he, therefore, moved that the whole subject be deferred for one year, when the Commandery-in-Chief meets at Denver, and that was carried without opposition, and thus ended the Loeffler case for the present.

GENERAL DODGE: It was referred back to the same committee.

THE RECORDER: Yes, it was referred back with all papers, I believe, to the same committee that has already prejudged the case. It will come up again at Denver.

And now, Mr. Commander, I want right here, before I take my seat, to offer for adoption the following resolution:

Resolved, That the thanks of the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion are due and are hereby tendered to General John C. Black for his faithful service in defending this Commandery and our Companion, Major C. D. A. Loeffler, the validity of whose election as a Companion of the Order, by the Ohio Commandery was assailed in the Commandery of the District of Columbia, instigated by its *Recorder*, Major W. P. Huxford, at the late meeting of the Commandery-in-Chief at Philadelphia, October 20, 1909.

I want to say that the argument of General Black for us in that behalf, was one which would have met with the enthusiastic approval of every member of the Ohio Commandery.

THE COMMANDER: Before that motion is put I would like to have you express your opinion by a vote as to what shall be done with the report of the *Recorder*. I think that is a matter of so much importance that it should be a matter of record, and with your approval it will so be made; and the resolution, which has met with a second, I should like to have a rising vote upon. All in favor of the resolution as to General Black please rise.

The vote was unanimous in favor of the adoption of the resolution.

THE COMMANDER: Is there any further business before the Commandery? if not, adjournment is in order.

COMPANION W. H. CHAMBERLIN: I have no formal resolution, but I move that a vote of thanks be given to the Companions of Columbus for their entertainment of us. I move that such a resolution be prepared and made of record at this meeting.

The motion was carried.

COMPANION TAYLOR: Commander, it has been suggested in view of the condition of the case of our Companion Major Loeffler, that it would be proper to move that a committee be appointed by our Commander to take charge of his case before the Commandery-in-Chief at the next meeting, which will consider finally this case. That will be the Denver meeting. I move that a committee of five be appointed by our Commander to gather the facts and to formulate a line of defence in connection with Major Loeffler's attorney, Lieutenant Patrick, to present the case at the Denver meeting of the Commandery-in-Chief next year.

COMPANION WARNOCK: I would like to amend that motion to make it the duty of the committee to inquire as to the facts stated by our Recorder as to the action of Major Huxford, and if it be found to be true that he has taken occasion in a spirit of malice and revenge to follow Major Loeffler in this way, that that committee be instructed to formulate charges against Major Huxford. It seems to me it is the most iniquitous performance I ever heard of that a man should be followed and hounded down in this way by a person who himself lives in a glass house. I move that this committee be instructed to investigate, and if they find that he has done this in a vengeful spirit, that charges be preferred to be heard before the Commandery-in-Chief.

COMPANION TAYLOR: In accepting that amendment, I would simply call attention of the Commandery to the fact of the rejection of Captain Hanson on the ground that he was dishonorably discharged from the service of the United States and restored. Major Huxford was present and one of the judges on a man who was rejected because he had in the defence of his honor, fought a duel, when, as I understand, Major Huxford himself, stood convicted of five out of six counts for malfeasance in office, and was cashiered and debarred from ever holding a place of emolument or honor under his country. In the matter of Captain Loeffler, it all turns on the question of whether a man has a right to change his residence or not. A man living in the District of Columbia, is a resident of nowhere, unless he elects some place of residence where he shall be a citizen. In the District of Columbia, he is a man without a country. He has no right to vote, no voice in the government. Captain Loeffler had elected, after due consideration, that he would consider Canton, Ohio, as his place of residence. This same man, Huxford, prevented General H. V. Boynton, of the District of Columbia Commandery, from transferring his membership to this Commandery, refusing to give him a certificate of transfer, and General Boynton was a citizen of Cincinnati, Ohio, registered there every year that the law requires his registration, came on every time that there was an election, State or National, to Cincinnati, to vote.

The motion as amended was carried.

The Commander will announce the Committee of Five at or before the next stated meeting.

COMPANION F. G. CROSS: I move that the report made by our Recorder, Major Thrall, be approved by this Commandery, and that we extend to him a vote of thanks for his stewardship as the representative of the Ohio Commandery in Philadelphia.

A COMPANION: And that it be made a part of the proceedings.

THE COMMANDER: You will remember that I made the statement that it would be made part of the record.

The motion was carried.

Adjourned.

